A

LETTER

To the Learned

Mr. *Henry Dodwell*;

CONTAINING

Some REMARKS on a (pretended) Demonstration of the Immateriality and Natural Immortality of the Soul,

IN

Mr. *Clark*'s ANSWER to his late *Epistolary Discourse*, &c.

By Anthony Collins.

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Mr. HENRY DODWELL, &c.

SIR,

THERE is nothing more unreasonable than to imagine there is any dangerous Consequence in allowing Men fairly to examine the Grounds of receiv'd Opinions, or to suspect the good Intentions of those who do examine: For till Men have something besides *Reason* for their direction, it is their duty to follow *that Light* wherever it leads them; and how they can use their Reason, when there is

a Reſtraint laid on their Tongues and Pens, is as unconceivable to me, as how People ſhould be Chriſtians in *Japan*, or Proteſtants in *Spain*. Every Man has the Faculty of Reaſoning, but without the uſe and exerciſe of that Faculty, will make little or no progreſs in any Science.

And what makes ſuch Suſpicions, if poſſible, ſtill more unaccountable, is, That Examination is really a mark of Sincerity; ſince the hazard of ſuffering lies more on the ſide of Examination, than on that of ſubmitting to prevailing Opinions. And to be ſure it is a diſpoſition of Mind much more favourable to Truth than the contrary one; becauſe Reaſon being the ſame in all Men, we ſhould more of us light upon Truth, did we rely on the uſe of the ſame common Faculty, than we poſſibly can, by following the contradictory Orthodoxys of the ſeveral Countrys in the World.

But ſince through the Artifices of deſigning Men, they who ſincerely ſearch after Truth meet with ſuch diſcouragement, eſpecially if there be any blot in their Characters, or any thing done in the whole courſe of their Lives that is capable of having an invidious Turn given to it, I publickly return *You* my Thanks for your late *Epiſtolary Diſcourſe*, wherein

wherein you have ſhow'd a noble Extmple of Freedom and Liberty in attacking the receiv'd Opinion of the *Natural Immortality of the Soul.* Your Character of Piety towards God, Charity to the Neceſſitous, and Patience under Afflictions, occaſion'd by adhering to your Principles (which were once thought Doctrines of the Church of *England)* is too well eſtabliſh'd in the World by the Applauſes of thoſe Men, who now endeavour to make you as little in the judgment of others, as you were great in theirs before, not to derive ſome Credit on thoſe who purſue your Steps, or at leaſt to abate the Edg of Satyr and Invective againſt them: For the World has now a great Inſtance not only of the Conſiſtency of Zeal for Religion with Liberty of Thinking, but that it is evidently your Zeal for Religion which has occaſion'd the Liberty you have taken.

Under the Protection therefore of your Authority, I ſhall propoſe ſome of my Thoughts to the World on the great Subject of the *Natural Immortality of the Soul*, with all the brevity that Perſpicuity will allow, and in ſome reſpect promote the Deſign of your late Diſcourſe: For tho I do not pretend to

prove the *Natural Mortality of the Soul* by Reaſon, yet if I can ſhow the Inconcluſiveneſs of the moſt cogent Argument for its *Natural Immortality*, they who lay a ſtreſs on that Argument will be better prepar'd to receive thoſe Proofs from the *Scriptures and the firſt Fathers*, urg'd in your *Epiſtolary Diſcourſe*, to ſhow, That *the Soul is a Principle naturally Mortal.*

The principal Argument for the *Natural Immortality of the Soul* is founded on the Suppoſition of its Immateriality; and therefore great Endeavours have been made uſe of to prove the Soul an Immaterial Being, and particularly by the Reverend and Learned Mr. *Samuel Clark*, who in his *Letter* * to you propoſes *to demonſtrate*, that the *Soul cannot poſſibly be Material.* And what he has there ſaid being urg'd with very great Acuteneſs and Dexterity, I ſhall impartially conſider it.

* Pag. 33.

By *Soul*, I ſuppoſe, Mr. *Clark* means a Subſtance with a Power of Thinking, or, as he expreſſes himſelf, with an *Individual Conſciouſneſs.*

By ſaying *the Soul cannot poſſibly be Material*, I conceive is meant, that the Subſtance which hath Solidity added to it, cannot have a Power of Thinking

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added to it; or, that the ſame Subſtance cannot be both Solid, and have the Power of Thinking.

To demonſtrate the Impoſſibility of this, it ſhould be declar'd what is to be underſtood by the word *Subſtance*; and then, in what the Identity of the ſame Subſtance doth conſiſt. But theſe things being omitted, I ſhall obſerve, that after an Enumeration of *Arguments which*, he ſays, *have been urg'd by the wiſeſt and moſt conſiderate Men in all Ages* (ſo it is ſaid, and ſo let it paſs) we are told, *The ſame thing is demonſtrable from the ſingle Conſideration of bare Senſe or Conſciouſneſs. For*, ſays he, *Matter being a diviſible Subſtance, conſiſting always of ſeparable, nay of actually ſeparate and diſtinct Parts*; *'tis plain, unleſs it were eſſentially conſcious, in which caſe every Particle of Matter muſt conſiſt of innumerable ſeparate and diſtinct Conſciouſneſſes, no Syſtem of it in any poſſible Compoſition or Diviſion can be an Individual conſcious Being: For ſuppoſe three or three hundred Particles of Matter at a mile, or any given diſtance, one from another*; *is it poſſible that all thoſe ſeparate Parts ſhould in that ſtate be one individual conſcious Being? Suppoſe then all theſe Particles brought together into one Syſtem, ſo as to touch one another*; *will they thereby, or by* P. 33, 34.

any Motion or Compoſition whatſoever, become any whit leſs truly diſtinct Beings than they were at the greateſt diſtance? How then can their being diſpos'd in any poſſible Syſtem, make them one individual conſcious Being? If you ſuppoſe God by his infinite Power ſuperadding Conſciouſneſs to the united Particles, yet ſtill thoſe Particles being really and neceſſarily as diſtinct Beings as ever, cannot be themſelves the Subject in which that individual Conſciouſneſs inheres; but the Conſciouſneſs can only be ſuperadded by the addition of ſomething, which in all the Particles muſt ſtill it ſelf be but one individual Being. The Soul therefore, whoſe Power of Thinking is undeniably one individual Conſciouſneſs, cannot be poſſibly a Material Subſtance.

I have ſet down Mr. *Clark*'s Argument at length, and in the full force of his own Expreſſions, that a Judgment may be made more eaſily of the Pertinency or Impertinency of the following Obſervations

1. Since it is only requir'd that a thing be an Individual Being, in order to its being a proper Subject of a Power of Thinking, or at leaſt that it may be poſſible for God to ſuperadd to it a Power of Thinking; it is evident, by Mr. *Clark*'s own account of Matter, which he makes to conſiſt

consist of *actually separate and distinct Parts* (tho I wonder that at the same time he should make it *divisible*, when by its consisting of separate and distinct Parts it is actually divided) That those *separate and distinct Parts* are capable of having a power of Thinking, or an Individual Consciousness superadded to each of them; because the want of Individuality or Distinctness is the sole Reason urg'd, why a System of Matter cannot have a power of Thinking, or an Individual Consciousness: And consequently, according to Mr. *Clark*'s own reasoning, Matter may have a power of Thinking, or an Individual Consciousness.

2. Since an Individual Being, according to Mr. *Clark*, can only be the subject of a power of Thinking; Why may not several Particles of Matter, when united in one System, become an Individual Being, and be by the Power of God render'd incapable of any Division or Separation by Natural Causes, and consequently be a subject capable of Thinking? If several Particles of Matter can be so united as to touch one another, or closely to adhere; wherein does the Distinctness or Individuality of the several Particles consist? The Distinctness or Individuality

dividuality is as much loſt to me by this ſuppos'd Union, as the Diſtinctneſs of the Parts (if I may ſo ſpeak) of an Immaterial Being, upon ſuppoſition that Extenſion is not excluded out of the Idea of Immateriality, as it is not by Mr. *Clark*, if I rightly apprehend him. For if the Union of Material Particles be compleat and intire, I can as well conceive an *Immaterial Being* capable of Diviſion, as conceive thoſe Particles ſo united capable of Diviſion from one another. All the Difference perceivable by us, between ſuch a Material Subſtance and an Immaterial Subſtance, beſides Solidity in one and want of Solidity in the other, lies in this, That one perhaps continues as it was created, and the other becomes by the Power of God, what the other was by Creation. And what difference that will make as to one's being capable of the power of Thinking, and the other's not being capable of that power, does not appear to me, and never will, till Thinking and Solidity are prov'd to be incompatible in the ſame Subject.

3. But let us ſuppoſe with Mr. *Clark*, that a Material Subſtance in any manner diſpos'd, is not an Individual Being; yet I cannot ſee but that an Individual Power may reſide in a Material Syſtem, which conſiſts

consists of actually separate and distinct Parts; and consequently, that an Individual Being is not indispensably necessary to be the subject of an Individual Power. Now if an Individual Power can be lodg'd by God in, or superadded to that which is not an Individual Being, or follows from the Composition or Modification of a Material System, consisting of actually separate and distinct Particles; the very Soul and Strength of Mr. *Clark*'s Demonstration is gone. And Matter of Fact is so plain and obvious, that a Man can't turn his Eye but he will meet with Material Systems, wherein there are Individual Powers, which are not in every one, nor in any one of the Particles that compose them when taken apart, and consider'd singly. Let us instance for example in a *Rose*. *That* consists of several Particles, which separately and singly want a Power to produce that agreeable Sensation we experience in them when united. And therefore either each of the Particles in that Union contributes to the Individual Power, which is the external Cause of our Sensation; or else God Almighty superadds the *Power* of producing that Sensation in us upon the Union of the Particles. And this, for ought I can see, may be the case of Matter's thinking.

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Thoſe Particles which compoſe the Brain, may under that Modification either have the power of Thinking neceſſarily flowing from them, or elſe may have the power of Thinking ſuperadded to them by the Power of God, tho ſingly and ſeparately they may not have the power of Thinking. The Fallacy of Mr. *Clark*'s Argument, by which, as I take it, he deceives himſelf, lies in this, That by an Individual Power he underſtands a power that can only proceed from, or reſide in, an Individual Being; which is a plain begging of the Queſtion, or ſuppoſing the thing in diſpute, that *Thinking is ſuch an Individual Power*: To prove which, he has not, tho all he ſays depends on it, offer'd ſo much as one word, and I conceive cannot till he is perfectly acquainted with the Nature of Thinking. I readily acknowledg that we can diſtinguiſh the various Modes of Thinking from one another; but whether Thinking is ſuch a kind of Operation as proceeds from an Individual Being, or whether it proceeds from a Being which conſiſts of actually ſeparate and diſtinct Parts, I muſt be content to be ignorant, till ſome better proof is produc'd to place it in an Individual Being, than by calling it an Individual Power.

4. But

4. But after all, ſuppoſing Mr. *Clark* had prov'd that Conſciouſneſs could only reſide in an Individual Being, and that that Individual Being muſt be an Immaterial Being, the Soul would not then be prov'd to be naturally Immortal; and conſequently all the pains taken to prove the Soul Immaterial, ſignify nothing. Nothing is prov'd naturally Immortal by the ſuppoſition of the Soul's Immateriality, but the Subſtance of the Soul. Now the Soul is ſuppos'd to be a Thinking Immaterial Being; and unleſs a Thinking Immaterial Being can be prov'd naturally Immortal, the Soul cannot be prov'd naturally Immortal. But how this can be done, I know not, but by ſhowing the inſeparable Connection between Immaterial Being and Thinking; and till then we have as much reaſon to believe, that Thinking is an Action which may commence after the exiſtence of its Subject, and may periſh or ceaſe to exiſt, its Subject ſtill remaining. And thus there is no more progreſs made in the proof of the Natural Immortality of the Soul by proving its Immateriality, than there would be in proving the natural Immortality of Mens Bodies, which are laid in the Grave, by ſhowing that Matter can only periſh by Annihilation: For as in the

the laſt Caſe no proof is made of the neceſſary continuance together of the ſeveral Particles that compoſe our Bodies; ſo in the other caſe we have no proof, that Thinking is an inſeparable Property of Immaterial Being. Of what uſe then is this Argument to the Ends and Purpoſes of Religion? For if we have no ſecurity that we muſt hereafter exiſt in a State of Perception, as by only proving the Natural Immortality of the Subſtance of the Soul, we have not; it can be of no uſe to influence our Lives and Actions.

5. But let us ſuppoſe, that from the power of Thinking, or Individual Conſciouſneſs, we can prove the Immateriality of the Soul, and from its Immateriality prove its natural Immortality, and then ſee what will be the conſequence. All the numerous ſenſible Creatures in the Univerſe are put in the ſame condition with Man, and made capable of eternal Happineſs as well as he. Now, to avoid this Conſequence, there are two Things principally urg'd.

1. That all thoſe Creatures (which I call Senſible) are only mere Machines: Or,
2. That their Souls ſhall be annihilated upon the diſſolution of their Bodies.

To

To the First I answer, That Experience as much convinces us, that they perceive, think, *&c.* as that Men do. They avoid pain, and seek pleasure, and give as good marks of Uneasiness under the one, and Satisfaction under the other, as Men do. They avoid pain, and seek pleasure, by the same Motives that Men do, *viz.* by reflecting on their past Actions, and the Actions of their fellows, with the Consequences of them; which is apparent from their acting more to their own advantage, the more experience they have had. But if after all, Brutes are only mere Machines, the difficulty of proving the Soul Immaterial will be increas'd. For if the Operations of Brutes are not sufficient to distinguish them from Clocks and Watches, the Operations of Men will not prove *them* to be superior to Machines.

To the Second Objection I answer: That if the Souls of Brutes are annihilated upon the dissolution of their Bodies, then the proof of the Natural Immortality of Mens Souls from their Immateriality, tends not to prove that their Souls shall really be Immortal; because mere Natural Immortality is not a Security from Annihilation, as is suppos'd in the Objection.

I ſhall now only add, That under the Uncertainty in point of Reaſon, both of the Soul's Immateriality and Natural Immortality, I am not the leſs certain of Man's Immortality from the Goſpel of Chriſt; and therefore for the ſake of thoſe who may be offended with me for my freedom, I ſhall obſerve, That the ſame Zeal which engages one Man to maintain, that a certain Argument has a great deal of force in it to prove the Immortality of the Soul, may engage another Man to maintain, that it is weak and dangerous. They both aim at the ſame End; they differ only in judging of the Nature of an Argument. They ought both to abſtain from all ſuſpicious Expreſſions; to abſtain, I ſay, not in ſaying they will abſtain, for that makes an ill Impreſſion, but by a perfect Silence. I am,

SIR,

Your humble Servant.

FINIS.